

Known Tips For Nominal Group Process

The **Nominal Group Process** is a technique for setting goals, surfacing ideas, identifying problems, obtaining suggestions for solving problems, or planning programs for an organization. The process allows the person in charge to (1) control the meeting and discussion, (2) keep the group working toward the task at hand, (3) ensure that everyone participates by presenting his/her ideas, and (4) set priorities and reach consensus on ideas, goals, problems, solutions, or program suggestions proposed by the group.

Basic Steps

1. Form groups of five to eight participants. Encourage the participants to form groups with people they do not know. (The leader may want to have everyone number off and assign certain numbers to specific groups. This will ensure a better mix of personalities and ideas in each group.)
2. Have the people introduce themselves to everyone in their group.
3. Each group needs to select a group leader and a recorder.
4. The group leader gives the participants a written statement of the problem. The problem statement should be open-ended such as:

"The most important concerns in _____ (topic area) _____ facing this organization are . . ."

"The main purpose of this organization is . . ."

"The best way to increase jobs in this community is to . . ."

"We can't get new people to join our organization because . . ."

The leader should avoid any detailed clarification of the idea, such as providing specific examples.

5. Participants silently write down their ideas on index cards or a worksheet without discussion with others. (Five to ten minutes)
6. Round-robin sharing of ideas. Within each group, proceed around the table with each person in turn sharing one idea from his/her list. No discussion other than clarification is permitted. The recorder writes the idea on newsprint for everyone in the group to see. Continue reading ideas around the table until all ideas have been recorded on newsprint. (The recorder should use the words of the person presenting the idea and not try to restate the individual's idea.)
7. Discussion and Clarification. After all the ideas have been recorded, encourage each group to discuss the ideas on the newsprint, comparing, clarifying, and defending their statements. Agreement or disagreement with an idea may be

encouraged, but the depth of the discussion should be controlled by the leader to ensure that a heated debate does not develop.

8. Each group needs to choose three to five top priority ideas. Groups are free to devise their own means for coming to a consensus on the top priorities. Members may want to "vote" using small round self-adhesive labels or by assigning points for votes, i.e., five points for a first place vote, three points for second, and one point for third.
9. If there is more than one group, each group leader reports to the entire group what their priorities are. Some clarification and discussion may be necessary.
10. The entire group needs to select its top five priorities. You may want to use the following voting system.

Write each groups' top priorities on newsprint. Tape newsprint to a wall where everyone can get to it. Give everyone five round self-adhesive dots. The dots are votes to indicate their priorities. Participants put the dots on the newsprint next to the statements they want to vote for. One to five dots can be used on a statement.

11. Tally the votes. This should bring a sense of closure to the Nominal Group process.